

Remarks

By this Amendment, claims 33 and 34 are amended and claims 14-22 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer. After entry of this Amendment, claims 8-10 and 31-39 will be present in this application. Reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remark is respectfully requested.

Claims 14-22 and 31-39 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, for alleged indefiniteness. Claims 17 and dependent claims 14-16 and 18-22 have been cancelled, so this rejection is moot with respect to these claims.

As indicated above, claim 34 is amended to recite first and second supplementary connectors, and the recitation of an "end cap" has been deleted. Each of the supplementary connectors has a first opening formed therein dimensioned to receive and hold a base member of the strap (although only one such opening may be used in a given instance of the apparatus), and a second opening formed therein dimensioned to receive and hold a portion of the support member. The support member has a selected cross sectional configuration at an end thereof. As amended, claim 44 recites that the opening for receiving and holding a portion of the support member in at least one of the first and second connectors comprises a first wall section extending axially outwardly from the base portion, and a second wall section extending axially outwardly from a base portion. The first and second wall sections bound the cavity to receive the support member in an axial direction.

Accordingly, applicant respectfully submits that claim 34 is definite and fully satisfies all other requirements of 35 U.S.C. § 112. Therefore, the rejection of claim 34 and dependent claims 31-33 and 35-39 should be withdrawn.

Claims 14-22 and 31-39 are rejected for nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting over claims 1-25 of commonly owned U.S. Patent No. 6,685,144 (the '144 Patent) in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,85,033 to Hannah. In addition, claims 8-10 are rejected for nonstatutory obviousness-type double patenting over the '144 Patent in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,767,087 to Comu. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

Filed concurrently herewith is a terminal disclaimer by which the applicant has disclaimed the terminal portion of any patent issuing from this application such that it will expire on the same day as the commonly owned '144 Patent. Therefore, the obviousness-type double patenting rejection should be withdrawn.

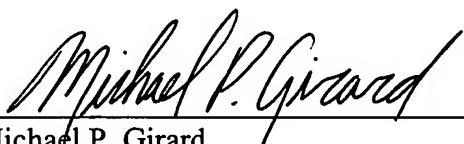
Based on the foregoing, applicant respectfully submits that the claims are directed to allowable subject matter and the application is in condition for allowance. Should the examiner believe that anything further is necessary to place this application in better condition for allowance, the examiner is requested to contact applicant's representative by telephone.

Respectfully submitted,

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